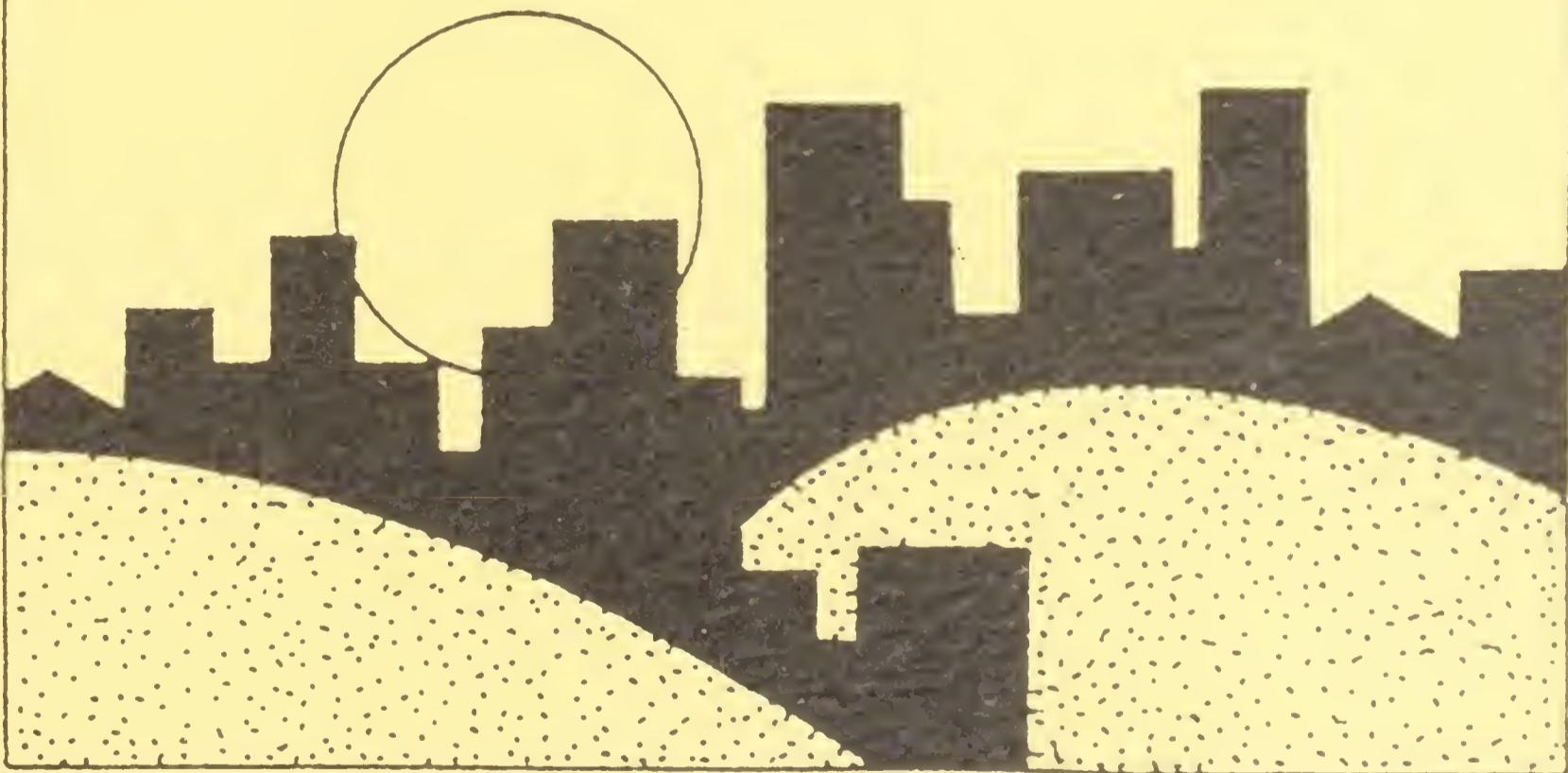


The Highway of Civilisation and Common Sense:
Street Regulation and the Transformation of Social
Space in 19th and Early 20th Century Melbourne

Andrew Brown-May

Urban Research Program
Working Paper No.49
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URBAN RESEARCH PROGRAM
RESEARCH SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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*Series Editor:
Rita C. Coles*

The Highway of Civilisation and Common Sense: Street Regulation and the Transformation of Social Space in 19th and Early 20th Century Melbourne.¹

Andrew Brown-May

Introduction

Stones can make people docile and knowable.²

The introduction of the automobile at the turn of the century and the swift regulatory phase that ensued marked the line between two discrete eras of the city before and after the car conquered the street. The urban morphology of the twentieth-century city is notable for the atomisation of space into more and more discrete units. The shopping mall, the department store and the office block have subsumed many of the activities once the domain of the street. The interstitial space between home, workplace and shop was annihilated by the growth of dormitory suburbs and the cult of privacy. By 1920, rush hour at Flinders Street Railway Station was a hallowed institution of urban life, as the crowds of city workers flowed out to their suburban retreats, and by midnight, after the pantomimes, theatres, musicals and reviews had disgorged their audiences in time for the last train, Melbourne was 'a city of dreadful night'; indeed, 'Had Cindarella been a Melbourne girl she would have needed no promise to a fairy godmother to remind her that midnight was at hand.'³

¹ I would like to thank the Urban Research Program, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra, for inviting me to present a paper on this work in May 1994. This study is based on aspects of my PhD thesis: Andrew May, 'The itinerary of our days: the historical experience of the street in Melbourne, 1837-1923', University of Melbourne, 1993. See also Andrew May, 'Public life and public place in central Melbourne: historical reflections' in Andrew May (ed.), *The living heart: images and prospects for central Melbourne*, Monash Publications in History No. 15, 1993, pp. 32-42.

² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*, (tr. Alan Sheridan), London, 1987 (first published 1975), p. 172.

³ *Argus*, 21 February 1920.

By the 1920s, the motor car had radically and incontestably changed the physical landscape and geometry of the street, had altered its aesthetic experience as smoke, noise and speed began to replace the sound, pace and odour of the horse-drawn age, and had created a whole new conception of time and space. Traffic lights, pedestrian crossings, new street signs and safety zones would replace the horse trough and the hitching post to become the hallmarks of city streets. In 1914, Melbourne's traffic was in chaos. A conference convened at the Town Hall in June brought together representatives from the Melbourne City Council (MCC), the Automobile Club of Victoria, the Police Department, and the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company, in order to discuss the regularisation of the traffic laws. A special committee of the Council was appointed to deal with the question and in September 1916, By-Law No. 134 repealed and replaced 26 previous street traffic by-laws dating back to 1844.

The advent of the motor car, it seems, sounded the death knell not only for the horse as a means of transport but for traditional street culture. Morphological changes to the city centre, urban sprawl, the disfigurement of the public street as locus for human ritual – in short, the 'death of the street' – have been traced directly to its influence.⁴ The disappearance of a lusty and frenetic nineteenth-century street life has been put down directly to the effects

⁴ Ingersoll, 'The death of the street: the automobile and Houston' in Jan Jennings (ed.), *Roadside America: the automobile in design and culture*, Ames, Iowa, 1990, pp. 149, 155; Phillippe Ariès, 'L'enfant et la rue, de la ville à l'anti-ville', *Urbi* II (December 1979), p. XII; James Holston, *The modernist city: an anthropological critique of Brasília*, Chicago, 1989, Chapter 4, 'The death of the street'. Most recently, on the issue of 'reclaiming the streets' by 'traffic calming', the car has been criticised for turning streets into inhuman zones: 'Until the arrival of the car, streets were central to community life. They were the place where people met neighbours, chatted, walked to shops or work, and where children played or passed the time of day' (Peter Newman and Jeff Kenworthy, *Winning back the cities*, New South Wales, 1992, p. 13); Kent Gerecke, 'The war against the street: William Whyte on the blank walls that are killing the city' in Kent Gerecke (ed.), *The Canadian city*, Montreal, 1991, pp. 175-178; Jan Tanghe, Sieg Vlaeminck & Jo Berghoef, *Living cities: a case for urbanism and guidelines for re-urbanization*, (tr. Ronald Southam), Oxford, 1984 (first published 1975), p. 6.

of the motor age on Australian cities.⁵ It has also been seen as an irony that a new technology designed to bring the chance of greater individual freedom in fact led to more stringent regulation of public mobility: 'Rather than creating freedom, the automobile created the myth of carefree motoring. Mobility must not be confused with, not mistaken for, freedom'.⁶

It is incontestable that the motor age changed the face of urban life forever. What is more problematic is its role as the prime instrument of this spatial and cultural shift. To what extent did the motor car in fact accelerate a long process of spatial redefinition dating back long before its advent? Are the perceived destruction of traditional street life, the marginalising of former street activities and uses, the trend towards the organisation, regulation and privatisation of so-called 'public' space, concomitant with quite different regulatory urges. To see the horseless-carriage as the *bête noire* of urban decay and the twentieth-century pathology of the street is, perhaps, to misconstrue the dynamics of urban socio-spatial regulation. To understand the nexus between space and society we must go right back to Melbourne's beginning, to a surveyor's grid in the 1830s, and trace from this *ab initio* ruling off in the wilderness of a matrix enclosing an invader's territory, which at once gave form to an idea of settlement, of progress, of civilisation, and at the same time replaced, denied, conquered the pre-existing patterns of an indigenous culture, the exercise of social power through spatial form.

To regard the street as a discrete observable element of urban space in which the evolution of spatial practice and control may be traced, as an historical artefact, as an identifiable arena for human drama, is inspired by spatial and social crises which beset late twentieth-century Melbourne. The problems of traffic congestion in the city grid, already observed by the first decade of the century, are yet to be solved, and ever-increasing environmental concerns demand more immediate solutions. Allied to contemporary desires for spatial reorganisation is an observation of other socio-spatial questions: the general privatisation of what was once a more public space, the engrossment of lanes and streets by large-scale private developments, the manipulation of public streets by commercial interests, the marginalisation and control of the casual

⁵ Michael Cannon, *Life in the cities*, West Melbourne, 1978, p. 33.

⁶ Stephen Davies, 'Reckless walking must be discouraged: the automobile revolution and the shaping of modern urban Canada to 1930', *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine*, XVIII, 2 (October 1989), p. 123.

street economy, the use of the street for public protest or ritual, the provision and control of footbridges, squares, malls and arcades. Contemporary images of Melbourne's city streets are continually shaped by historical stereotypes, from the pervading image of the 'Paris end of Collins Street' to the identification of the very street grid itself as an historical artefact.⁷ It may well be a truism to suggest that in planning for the present we must observe the lessons of the past. But we may be well advised, as we plan for the cities of the twenty-first century, to observe the simple advice of Asa Briggs, one of the first historians to awaken an interest in Melbourne's urban past, who called for a historical dimension to any discussion of environmental quality and who cogently observed that 'there is more to be gained from comparing actual experiences, past and present...than from thinking of environmental problems in either an over-systematised fashion or in a utopian mould'.⁸

A further reason for choosing the street as an object of historical study relates generally to the continuity of the theme within a traditional genre of urban

⁷ Simon R. Molesworth, *Trust News* 19, 6 (December 1990), p. 2: 'An intrinsic part of our heritage, and one which thousands of Victorians appreciate each day, is the street grid which Robert Hoddle devised for the early colony. Our boulevards, wide city streets and generous intersections are definitively 'Melbourne' and contribute to the charm of the state's capitol [sic] city. They, together with our gardens and Victorian buildings, are the visual symbols by which our city is known both internationally and within Australia and it is essential that they be protected.' See also: 'The Hoddle grid of wide city streets crossed by narrow lanes and alleys is as much a part of Melbourne's heritage as its Victorian buildings and spacious gardens.' (*Age*, 6 December 1990, p. 13). Planning schemes of the 1980s reinforced the definition of the grid as a discrete inherited spatial form, its heritage value thereby empowering it with immutability: 'The Council is concerned that the identity of this area should not be devalued by the loss of clarity of both the edges of the grid and of the streets and built form within it.' (Strategy Plan Study Team for the Strategy Plan Review Steering Committee, *City of Melbourne Strategy Plan, Volume 1: the plan*, Melbourne, 1985, p. 281). In 1987, explicit use was made of the artefactual notion of the grid to explore the urban character of inner Melbourne: 'Treatments of the streets and buildings which reinforce the formal aspects of the grid will work with this most influential determinant of the city centre's character.' (Urban Design and Architecture Division, City of Melbourne, *Grids and greenery*, Melbourne, 1987, p. 68).

⁸ Asa Briggs, *The collected essays of Asa Briggs: Volume 1: words, numbers, places, people*, Brighton, Sussex, 1985, p. 89.

observation, and more particularly, to an academic demand for the street to be considered by urban historians as a fundamental dimension of social power. Juvenal's third *Satire* (1st century AD), John Gay's *Trivia* (1716), and Henry Mayhew's *London Labour & the London Poor* (1861-1862), perhaps signpost the genre of urban commentary, and their observations span nearly a millennium of city life.⁹ In their collective pictures of the city, the street recurs as an organising frame for crowds of beggars, prostitutes, hawkers, toffs and swells, for a catalogues of public dangers – traffic, crowds, accidents, assault, falling buildings and fire, for the social rhythms of morning, afternoon and night. The street was the focus of social drama, a place where one might learn the most about the scope and drama of urban life.

The itinerary of our days went very much of a pattern, and the major portion of them was spent loafing about the streets. No better academy can be devised for the study of mass humanity, and its idiosyncratic variation in types, castes, and social gradations.¹⁰

Norman Lindsay's recognition of the street as academy echoes earlier English descriptions of the street as a sociological vantage point, 'the best *Living Library*, to instruct Mankind, that ever you met with,'¹¹ 'a complete CYCLOPAEDIA, where every man...may find something to please his palate, regulate his taste, suit his pocket, enlarge his mind, and make himself happy and comfortable.'¹²

⁹ Dryden's translation of Juvenal in Basil Davenport, *The portable Roman reader*, Harmondsworth, 1978, pp. 598-612; E. Courtney, *A commentary on the satires of Juvenal*, London, 1980; William Henry Irving, *John Gay's London*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1928; Henry Mayhew, *London labour and the London poor*, New York, 1968 (first appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* (1849-1850), with the 1861-1862 edition expanded to four volumes).

¹⁰ Norman Lindsay, *My mask*, Sydney, 1973, p. 82.

¹¹ E. Ward, *The London Spy Compleat, in Eighteen Parts* (1698-1699), ed. R. Straus (ed.), London, 1924, p. 63, in Penelope J. Corfield, 'Walking the city streets: the urban Odyssey in eighteenth-century England', *Journal of Urban History* 16, 2 (February 1990), p. 141.

¹² P. Egan, *Life in London: Or, the Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorn Esq. and his Elegant Friend Tom the Corinthian*, London, 1823, p. 23, in Corfield, 'Walking the city streets', p. 141. Most recently, see George Watson, 'Confessions of a street

The Street Grid

When a man rides a long time through wild regions he feels the desire for a city.¹³

On their arrival, European settlers expressed culturally specific responses to the new landscape, to what they perceived as alternatively wild forest and wilderness to be tamed or a garden paradise ready for their arrival. The laying down of the grid, the pegging out of the streets, and the erection of buildings of social and civic significance, showed to newcomers that here was a statement of progress and civilisation in a wild region, here was a place with a clear future laid out before it which accorded with their desires and into which they might interpose, here indeed was a place for a city.

While the grid form may have suited colonial governments in its administrative simplicity, and surveyors in its ease of application, its practicality as a human setting was less clear. The grid plan was from the start and continued into the twentieth century to be the subject of much criticism on account of its lack of open space, its ignoring of local terrain and conditions, and its social anonymity. Hoddle's grid aligned Melbourne more or less with the Yarra River, but the creeks, rises and valleys of the site were not apprehended by a plan based on theoretical facility rather than practicality. That the Yarra periodically flooded the adjacent parts of the town, that Elizabeth Street was the line of an old watercourse, that for a century horses struggled with loaded drays up steep grades, that run-off from the city's streets silted up the river, or that indeed the City Council spent time and capital over the course of the century having to contain these effects of poor planning, may all be put down to the absence in the initial plan of a proper attitude to site utilisation.

The dimensions of this pursuit of regularity and regulation through the relationship between urban form and social function ramified throughout the

walker', *Virginia Quarterly Review* 68, 4 (Autumn 1992), p. 717: 'To walk across a city...is to open an anthology.'

¹³ Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, William Weaver (tr.), New York, 1974, p. 8.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, not just in the general arrangement of the landscape, but perhaps more effectively in the organisation and control of its discrete spaces.¹⁴ The opposites of social division which separated rich from poor, male from female, sane from mad, child from adult, rate-payer from itinerant, settler from aborigine, native-born from foreigner – were all applied to the spaces of the street, often enshrined in by-law and Police Act. The desire for regularity in street architecture was echoed in a growing and persistent urge to submit all social functions of the street under one overriding rationale – that of the street as the clear, unobstructed, free-flowing space of circulation. Thus is the democracy of the public street paradoxical: the street must be cleared of obstruction, yet it must be available to everyone. The regularising aesthetic of the urban plan, the innovations of street paving, lighting, trees and other improvements, whilst certainly in part the outcome of technological development, concern for public health, and individual or group altruism, serve quite easily as thinly veiled justifications for the needs of a hegemonic, land-owning, patriarchal class empowered to fashion space in its own image

Architecturally, the street grid eschewed any kind of functionalism and minimalised classical ideals of urban form: cartographically, it was part of imperial discourse. The chorographical endeavour visually, conceptually, politically and economically empowered the colonial regime. The straight lines ruled off a symbolic and actual matrix of colonisation, exclusion and control, imposing a new space-discipline. Practically, the lines on the maps enabled the introduction of boundaries, the enforcement of discipline, the imposition of law, the preservation of order. The surveyor, intimate of government bureaucrat and property developer, measured distances and angles and converted them into an instrument of surveillance, a form for the invigilation of government over squatter, European over Aborigine, man over woman, rich over poor, rate-payer over itinerant. The plan's smooth implementation was politically and economically expedient, designed primarily to discourage and negate an existing illegal settlement and to bring land into the market. Cadastral survey defined line by line the extent of the saleable asset and enabled the process of land sale. The intimate link whereby

¹⁴ Borsay has observed how the general remodelling of the street as an element in urban form was paralleled by efforts to manipulate the quality of space itself through improved lighting, surfacing and cleansing (Peter Borsay, *The English urban Renaissance: culture and society in the provincial town 1660-1770*, Oxford, 1989, p. 68).

‘command over money, command over space, and command over time form independent but interlocking sources of social power,’¹⁵ was observed by no-one more clearly than Robert Hoddle, the planner of Melbourne, when he wrote that ‘in a country where money makes money to such a degree as in this, let it be remembered that a pound saved is a pound gained, and let the settler bear in mind, that *time is money*.’¹⁶ Hoddle’s grid was an instrument of exclusion as much as enclosure. Just as the explorer and Surveyor-General Mitchell, that imperial and imperious selector for the Crown, encompassed the plains of Western Victoria in his acquisitive purview, the colonial maps created vacant social territory, cartographically ignoring the indigenous peoples of Port Phillip, imposing a new and exclusive authority of land ownership. The map, and the transposition of its geometry to the earth, creates a new space, which with imperial nomenclature becomes a new place, made already familiar for the reception of its new citizens.

The grid having been established as physical territory in 1837, the subsequent history of its site is a process of signification and invention and reinvention, as its constituent parts – the street, the lane, the right-of-way, the street corner, the carriageway, the footpath – are clarified and negotiated through regulation and social action. First impressions of the grid pattern in most frontier towns often interpreted it as a map of the future. The discrepancy between the scale of the pegged-out town and the extent to which its sections were actually filled up with buildings was a constant source of comment. This half-completed quality of the colonial town betrayed a future orientation which, rather than being a source of embarrassment, heralded the prosperity of its future.¹⁷ Newcomers searched for familiar patterns, not only on the ground, but in the recognisable government, religious, educational, legal, economic and social institutions which formed the matrix of their social structure.¹⁸ A developing corpus of urban description revealed a regular

¹⁵ David Harvey, *The condition of postmodernity*, Oxford, 1989, p. 165.

¹⁶ Hoddle, ‘A Chapter on Port Phillip’ in *Port Phillip Gazette*, 31 July 1841.

¹⁷ For a similar United States pattern, see August Heckscher, *Open spaces: the life of American cities*, New York, 1977, p. 18.

¹⁸ Manley notes a sixteenth century German codification to assist travellers in assessing new towns: city’s name and foundation history; rivers and other landscape features; public and private buildings, secular and sacred (palaces, gates, squares, means of defence, churches); method of government; education; social customs. (Lawrence Manley (ed.), *London in the age of Shakespeare: an anthology*, London, 1986, p. 26).

terminology linking the order of the grid to desirable social qualities; shops and buildings were ‘handsome,’ while the long, broad streets of Melbourne were ‘noble.’

In apprehending the use of the grid plan in Melbourne, observers compared it to other Old World or colonial towns in their experience. In the eyes of the visitor, Melbourne was indeed a ‘surveyor’s city,’¹⁹ and a standard lexicon of description and comparison was applied to the formality of its design: well, magnificently or judiciously laid out; the parallelogram; the right angle; the straight line; the chessboard; the arrow; the rectangle or oblong square. While the grid imposed a neutral geometry on its site, a functional and symbolic hierarchy quickly developed based on the peculiar locational factors of the town: proximity to the river and the wharf, elevation and view, entry and exit points, and transport nodes.

By the late 1860s, a description of Melbourne’s street hierarchy by ‘A Colonist’ could stand as exemplar for the remainder of the century. Crossing and parallel to Elizabeth Street, the city’s central east-west divider,²⁰ broad main streets displayed their individual traits: Bourke Street (palatial hotels, grand restaurants, Cobb’s coaches, theatres and concert rooms – pretty barmaids to the east, horses to the west); Collins Street (for fashions at ‘the longest credit, and...the highest price’ – doctors to the east, bankers to the west). The narrower streets constituted the ‘back slums’, the location of workshops, noxious odours, and ‘the lazy and disreputable classes.’ Such streets were appropriately named Flinders Lane, Little Collins Street, Little

Paul Fox has similarly noted: ‘The ability of Melbourne to claim the continent by utilising metropolitan images of science, civilisation and empire reflected, too, how Melbourne, from its inception, saw its cultural institutions in opposition to the wilderness.’ Paul Fox, ‘Knowledge and the city: Melbourne’s metaphysic’ in Penny Webb (ed.), *Imagining the city*, Melbourne, n.d., p. 45.

¹⁹ Hezekiah Butterworth, *Zigzag journeys in Australia; or, a visit to the ocean world*, Boston, 1891, p. 219.

²⁰ Elizabeth Street was rarely referred to as the city’s main street. For an exception from a description of the 1850s, see *Wide world travels of Cenek Paclt: incidents and experiences of his travels in America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa*, (tr. Olga B. M. Riha), Brisbane, 1986 (1888), La Trobe Library MS 10249: ‘There are many magnificent and expensive buildings located particularly along Elizabeth Street. It is the most animated street of the town with hundreds of stores.’

Bourke Street, Little Lonsdale Street.²¹ E. Carton Booth's contemporaneous elaboration of Melbourne's functional zones similarly identified the fashionable, mercantile, and business ends of town.²²

Street corners in the grid became important nodes not only in terms of the location thereon of substantial buildings (often hotels or banks), but in their role in navigation, often being assigned names appropriate to their adjacent buildings or businesses.²³ The visibility and exposure of the street corner made it an attractive and favoured pitch, not only in commercial or real estate terms (to the property developer or itinerant street seller), but in social terms as well as general meeting place. The street corner as 'metonym for the street system of exchange between people, residence, commerce, and traffic'²⁴ became negatively associated with obstruction, deviancy, and the congregation of larrikins, disreputable crowds, or lower-class vendors.

Changing street names due to offensive social connotations displayed the social and moral geography of the city, and was a clear index of class hegemony. If the residents of the little streets and lanes, Melbourne's 'infant St Giles',²⁵ could not be physically dispersed, their moral threat could be

²¹ A Colonist, *Victoria, the British 'El Dorado'*, London, 1870, pp. 20-24.

²² E. Carton Booth, *Another England*, London, 1869, pp. 268-270. In 1862, Bourke Street could be named as the central street in Melbourne, 'the great artery of the City' (*Illustrated Melbourne Post*, 25 April 1862).

²³ Alston's Corner (Collins and Elizabeth streets), Beehive Corner, Nicholson's Corner, Dawson's Corner, Puppy Dog Corner (Collins and Swanston streets), Equitable Corner (Collins and Elizabeth streets), Howitt's Corner, St Paul's Corner (Swanston and Flinders streets), Stephens and Elliott's Corner, Stanford's Corner (Russell and Bourke streets).

²⁴ Holston, *The modernist city*, p. 105. Brasília lacks street corners, curbs, sidewalks, squares, streets.

²⁵ Frederic Wilkinson, letter 16 October 1849, La Trobe Library; 'Lanes, in a modern town or city, are a disgrace to the surveyor; crime and disorder always plant their habitations there; they shun the wide and airy streets' (Samuel Mossman, *The gold regions of Australia*, London, 1852, p. 82); the little streets 'form filthy backgrounds to the handsome thoroughfares whose names they bear' (Booth, *Another England*, p. 268-9); 'dirty, alive with vermin, close and foetid' (John Freeman, *Lights and shadows of Melbourne life*, London, 1888, pp. 15-16); small streets 'poor relations' (William D. Boyce, *Australia and New Zealand illustrated*, Chicago, 1922, p. 126).

dissipated in their renaming. Just as Bourke Street West was famed for its horse sale-yards, Bourke Street East as an entertainment precinct, Collins Street for its fashionable businesses, Flinders Lane for its warehouses, other streets (particularly those to the north-east of the grid) attracted more negative connotations and were occasionally renamed under pressure from local residents concerned for their property values and the respectability of their neighbourhoods.

The work of surveyors, architects, engineers and builders, created the spaces of the city's streets, brought into being a physical world of steps, doorways, lanes, street corners, and verandahs, with numbers, names and signs. Such abstract space was only neutral on the drawing board, and its manipulation and contestation were essential in defining social territory. Where and when something happened was as important as what happened, and behaviour acceptable in one spatial setting was deviant in another. It is against this backdrop that space became place, that the social experience of the street was represented and contested, that the public street could be used as a mechanism of social control, a matrix of exclusion and bias.

Street Regulation

Now, the sooner you put into operation, the old Bye Law, that vehicles &c., should not cross any crossing except at a walking pace, the sooner will you revert, to what I might term, the highway of civilization and common-sense, in relation to traffic regulations.²⁶

For a century after the establishment of the grid in 1837, Melbourne's streets were made and remade according to the latest technological advances in street repair, constrained by the availability of labour and funds or the willingness of the city's engineers and architects to experiment. A constant striving for an improved street condition necessarily affected the social and aesthetic experience of street life; the vagaries of mud, dust, and noise, the corollaries of the nineteenth-century street, demanded a range of practical and social solutions.

²⁶ Melbourne City Council Archives Series 120/1, Town Clerk's Files, 1912/1022, 16/2/1912 (subsequent references to include file details only).

In the century or so after Melbourne's settlement, a great procession of vehicles passed through Melbourne's streets, many superseded by newer, quicker, more comfortable alternatives. Each successive innovation – bullock-dray, Hansom cab, omnibus, jingle, tram, bicycle, traction engine, motor car – was met with regulations to cater to its specific ramifications, its effect on the street surface, its speed or noise, its relationship to the pedestrian, to other means of transport, and to other uses of the street. By the turn of the century the MCC was confronted with new problems created by motor-driven wagons. Motor haulage often damaged to road surfaces, but the Council recognised in 1906 that motor haulage was a universal technology here to stay, and that while it could regulate to a certain extent, it could do little to dissuade the new era of transport. But out of all the problems of street circulation, two remained most critical: speed and congestion (the lack of speed). In a paradoxical way, the MCCs drive to create an unobstructed street for social as much as circulatory reasons, played right into the hands of the motor car after the turn of the century, with important implications for the traditional rights and patterns of the pedestrian .

By the late 19th century, many public streets were being used as no more than extensions of timber yards or warehouses, and a stricter delineation of zones for pedestrians, general street traffic and stationary vehicles was being demanded. In 1884, 'blocking' occurred daily in Flinders Lane West as carters left their horses to rest and feed, and many drivers found it almost impossible to drive through. In 1888, a 'regular and long-standing nuisance' on the west side of Stephen Street between Collins and Little Flinders streets was caused by one resident 'using the footway as a workshop, blocking it from the use of the public'. Parts of Collins Street west of Queen Street, where vehicles stood for long periods outside auction rooms and carriers' offices, were in 1909 no more than 'a stand or stable'. Felton, Grimwade and Co. of Little Flinders Street, echoing the view of many city businesses, felt 'it only reasonable to expect that the space in front of this building should be reserved for ourselves.' By the time of the First World War, although some regulations had been instituted to arrest the problem of unattended cars, the blocking of streets was still a major problem.²⁷ By 1920, the Town Clerk insisted upon the Council's regulations being strictly enforced:

²⁷ Public Record Office of Victoria, VPRS 3181 unit 842, Melbourne City Council Town Clerk's Files Series 1, 1884/99, 14/1/1884 (subsequent references to include file details

which forbid the indiscriminate use of busy streets as garages for motor-cars, especially in Collins and Bourke Streets between Swanston and Elizabeth Streets and in Swanston and Elizabeth Streets, south of Bourke Street, intersection; also in the busy portion of Flinders Street; that the HCC consider that provision should be made in the less busy streets for what is known as ‘parking’ or accommodating motor cars whose owners must use them for business purposes daily in the City.²⁸

The Council also realised the necessity of ‘Provision for “parking” cars’, by that time common practice in England, Europe and the United States. Rita Neuhoffer of suburban Armadale, who had left her car in Collins Street for 2 hours 5 minutes while taking tea at the Francatelli Cafe, was fined in the new crack-down on leaving motor cars unattended contrary to clause 7 of By-Law No. 142. The following year, many motorists were finding it difficult to secure a parking space in the city as they competed with licensed vans, carriers’ carts and other vehicles. A conference of the Royal Automobile Club, the Police and the MCC suggested that cars be left in the middle of certain streets (portions of Lonsdale, Queen, William and King), the positions to be marked with lime-wash.²⁹

The battle for the right to take up street space was paralleled by a battle over the right to move through it at speed. Furious driving had been prohibited from the earliest days under the Police Act. Racing and furious driving were a problem on St Kilda Road in the 1850s, while in the central streets ‘Everybody gallops...or at least goes at a canter – which they call the Australian *lope*.’ After increasing incidents of pedestrians being hit by speeding carts, By-Law No. 56 was established in 1865 making it mandatory for vehicles to cross street intersections at a walking pace. By the first

only); 3181/849, 1888/927, 1/5/1888; 3181/887, 15/4/1909; 1912/6101, 3/10/1912; 1912/6625, 28/10/1912; 1913/1192, 26/2/1913; 1913/6812, 5/11/1913; 1913/3819, 30/6/1916; 1915/1697, 16/3/1915; 1916/4575.

²⁸ 1920/100, 9/1/1920, 8/1/1920.

²⁹ 1920/5964; 1921/1287, 4/3/1921.

decades of the century, Motor Car Acts and council laws contained a whole range of street traffic regulations.³⁰

The burgeoning street traffic regulations were taken by some as a measure not of excessive municipal interference in public affairs, but as a sign of egalitarianism and social improvement. Having elucidated the political backwardness of the mother country, Hogan in 1889 noted the 'great and omnipresent evil' of London's high number of annual road fatalities:

I can easily believe such to be the case, for there are apparently no municipal bye-laws which London drivers are bound to respect and obey... Their brethren in Melbourne – Greater Britain's London – are far from being allowed to rule the road in this autocratic fashion. There the rights of the people on foot are conserved and protected from the arbitrary aggression of the people who hold the reins. If the latter attempt to travel faster than a walking-pace around a principal intersection, they are summarily stopped by the policeman on duty and fined next morning by the magistrates... Lest anyone should plead ignorance of the bye-law on the subject, the warning words, 'Walk over crossing,' printed in large capitals, are conspicuously displayed on boards and suspended from the lamp-posts.³¹

Hogan comfortingly notes that the pedestrian has 'a general feeling of personal safety, and an almost absolute immunity from accidents'. Yet in the same year, despite ringing his bicycle bell so that 'people should get out of his way', Arthur Thompson collided at speed with two women at the intersection of Elizabeth and Collins streets. While no offence had been committed, the police again pushed for a law against rapid riding on machines through the streets.³² In June 1898, there was a collision between a cyclist riding at 15 miles an hour and a hansom-cab in St Kilda Road, and the 'two lady riders

³⁰ 3181/417, 19/4/1856; W, Howitt, *Land, labour and gold or two years in Victoria*, London, 1858, p. 25; 3181/627, 1865/[1073], 16/10/1865; By-Law No. 56 'to prevent the danger from rapid driving and riding across the intersections of the streets of the city'.

³¹ James Francis Hogan, *The Australian in London and America*, London. 1889, pp. 181-2.

³² 3181/634, 1889/2865, 2/12/1889.

whom he passed just prior to the accident called out, ‘Oh, you scorchers!’ as he passed them.³³ A month earlier, H. Moreau had written to the Council from Sydney enquiring on behalf of a Home Correspondent as to any regulations existing in relation to the running of motor-cars.³⁴ By 1910, there were calls for ‘regulating the speed of motor-cars, motor-cycles and bicycles, in the interest of the Blind many of whom are, unfortunately, compelled to travel alone.’ In 1912, the Automobile Club sent a letter to car drivers imploring them to drive at a considerate pace: ‘The Committee earnestly desire that Motorists generally, under the present freedom enjoyed, will individually and collectively, make it quite unnecessary for the Authorities to make any further, and perhaps drastic, regulations for controlling this traffic.’ In 1914, pedestrians complained that motorists turned corners too fast and without giving sufficient warning.³⁵

In 1886, the eight most dangerous city intersections (at the most dangerous times from 8.30 to 10 a.m. and from 3 to 5 30 p.m.) were considered by timber merchant Clarence Hicks to be the junctions of Bourke and Swanston, Bourke and Elizabeth, Swanston and Flinders, Collins and Elizabeth, Elizabeth and Flinders, Flinders and Queen, Flinders and Spencer, and Collins and Swanston streets. ‘The magnificently wide streets of Melbourne contain,’ he considered, ‘ample room for three times the present amount of traffic, if judiciously controlled.’ Traffic congestion was most acute at the intersection of Swanston and Flinders streets, and various suggestions were made from the 1890s about ways to alleviate the traffic problem by means of street widening, the formation of crescents or squares, the construction of subways or overhead walkways. After the construction of the new railway station at the south-west corner after the turn of the century the corner carried even more volumes of city passengers, and a 1919 Board of Inquiry into Melbourne’s traffic congestion, noting the increase of the ‘travelling

³³ *Argus*, 20 June 1898; *Age*, 20 June 1898.

³⁴ ‘Will there be any objection raised to the running of a Motor Car... Will there be any restriction put upon the nature of the motive power used, such as Electricity, petroleum or any other propelling power... What is the rate of speed duly recognised in the City and Suburbs... Must a qualified engineer be given charge of such a Motor’ (3181/866, 1898/1609, 18/5/1898).

³⁵ 1910, Secretary, Association for the Advancement of the Blind, 28/1/1910; 1912/7505, 11/12/1912, Automobile Club of Victoria; 1914/3535, 5/6/1914, Richard Heath, 4/5/1914.

habit', advised against subways, rounded corners and safety islands as solutions to street congestion. By 1920, it was not uncommon at Town Hall Corner for 'ten or a dozen cars to be "banked" in Collins-street or Swanston-street, waiting for an opportunity to cross the intersection.' Tramway and police pointsmen in white helmet and blue uniform, signalling street traffic by hand at main intersections, were to become obsolete in the face of new American technology of a signal with the word 'Stop' and 'Go'.³⁶

The Motor Car Acts of 1909 and 1915 contained provisions relating to passing trams, and restricting dazzling headlights. Following a 1914 Traffic conference, the MCC passed By-Law No. 134 'to amend and consolidate the By-laws and Regulations with reference to Street Traffic', which came into operation in September 1916. In 1917, By-Law No. 142, which set down provisions relating to traffic keeping to the left on the carriageway, indicating stops or turns, hook turns, vehicle lights (all vehicles to carry a fixed red light visible from the rear), and pedestrians keeping to the right.³⁷ The new by-law also applied a one-way traffic rule, which By-Law No. 134 had applied the previous year to sections of Little Collins Street, to Little Bourke Street between Elizabeth and Swanston streets, and to Little Flinders between Queen and Market streets. The new one-way traffic rule epitomised the transformation of traditional circulatory rights by a radically new traffic

36 3181/846, 1886/3469, Clarence Hicks, Junction Timber Yard, 22/5/1886; 3181/866. 1898/2635, 1/8/1898; 1919/1676. On subways, see also 1913/3745, 26/6/1913, and *Age and Argus*, 6 August 1913; 'Report of board appointed to investigate the problem of relieving congestion of traffic in Melbourne', Melbourne, 1919. There had also been a Metropolitan Traffic Commission report in 1911-1912 (see 3181/199); *Age*, 21 July 1920; 1917/4852, 16/1/1918, City Engineer. The American 'Stop-and-Go' mechanical device had been tried in Sydney by 1921, but in the view of Melbourne authorities was not yet seen as being any more efficient than the pointsmen, being 'no more efficacious than the overhead contrivance recently tested at the Town Hall corner' (*Herald*, 20/1/1921). For details of traffic rules for pointsmen and drivers, see 1916/4575, Victoria Police, 4/6/1914.

37 City of Melbourne By-Law No. 142 'to repeal the regulations made on the 11th day of December 1916 and to amend and add to certain clauses in By-law No. 134'. (The Regulations of 1916 had been made 'for the route to be observed by all carriages, carts, vehicles, and persons, and for keeping order in the carriage and footways and other public places and for preventing any obstruction thereof'). Amended in 1923 by By-Law No. 170.

regime which sought to solve traffic congestion by restricting public accessibility. Traditional itineraries were defended in the face of such a radical move: in Little Collins Street, carters could no longer haul the same tonnage uphill as they could downhill,³⁸ and lorry drivers defied the attempts of the by-laws officer to enforce the change:

I was at the corner of Little Collins and Queen Sts giving attention to the One Way traffic...I there saw a lorry driver...about to enter Little Collins Str from the West. I signalled him to stop. He called out 'What the fucking hell do you want,' I explained the requirements of Clause 14 of the By Law to him and requested him to turn back. He replied 'Go and get fucked'. I said to him don't use that language in the street. He replied Are you a fucking wowser.³⁹

By 1923, there was a demand not only for the prevention of physical obstruction, but a new and self-consciously modern demand for speed:

The onward march of civilisation had made it imperative to save time, hence the 'speeding up' which has taken place. Surely this is applicable to the passenger motor car and will continue despite any efforts for its subjugation. Regulations should be based on common sense, and the erection of a notice board limiting speed to 10 or 15 m.p.h. on an open road where good visibility can be obtained is not only ignored by passing traffic but does considerably more harm than good as the tendency to treat all wayside signs with indifference is thus created.⁴⁰

³⁸ 1916/4819, 5/10/1916, Gordon and Gotch, Queen Street, 3/10/1916.

³⁹ 1916/4802, 5/10/1916. Lorry driver John Westcott fined for using indecent language in a public place. For other prosecutions see 1923/1286, 1923/1442. By 1918, the portion of Little Bourke Street known as Post Office Place, was made one-way, and though some residents petitioned to revert to the original traffic conditions, the MCC regarded the change to Little Collins, Little Flinders and Little Bourke streets as helping congestion and stopping the nuisance of motor-cycles being tested in some sections of those streets (1919/335, 23/1/1919, Petition, 30/10/1918). In 1924, By-Law No. 174, further amending By-Law No. 142, came into operation in May, containing further one-way rules, as well as a prohibition on turns at some intersections.

⁴⁰ 'Lighthouses of the road', *Australian Municipal Journal*, nd, in 1924/2419, 21/5/1924.

The new technologies of the motor cycle and the motor car brought a totally new dimension to the city streets, not only through the new street accessories of the fill box, the air pump, the petrol bowser and a range of traffic signs, but through their association with speed, power, success, and control.

Footpath Regulation

While by 1840 the Police Act could charge citizens for riding across footpaths, in the first years after the laying down of Melbourne's grid there were barely such things as footpaths at all. The first decade of municipal improvement saw most of the central streets fringed with gravelled footpaths, but despite the construction of wooden footbridges over the water channels, many streets were in wet weather 'so muddy and broken up that they are almost impassable to foot passengers'. The 1870s saw technological improvements in footpath construction, and by the 1880s visitors could comment that Melbourne's footpaths were 'all well paved or asphalted.' Some sections of footpath in the central sections of Bourke and Collins streets were widened by six feet in the mid 1880s, as were other footpaths Flinders and Queen streets a few years later. The footbridges that crossed Melbourne's wide open gutters could still in wet weather make the streets impassable to pedestrians 'that have any regard for their boots.'⁴¹ By the 1890s, Melbourne's streets were being sewer'd, and the old footbridges were for some observers the subject for nostalgia:

Fifteen years ago they had open gutters in Melbourne, which looked very picturesque with their foot-bridges over them, and as a fairly constant stream of water ran down them, they had a cooling effect when seen on a dry summer day; but they had their disadvantages as well as dangers, so they have been altered to

⁴¹ Henry Gyles Turner, 'A day in 1839: Mr La Trobe's arrival in Victoria,' *Victorian Historical Magazine* 1 (December 1911), p. 149. On sidewalks and paving, see Spiro Kostof, *The city assembled: the elements of urban form through history*, London, 1992, pp. 209-212: 'The sidewalk...remained exceptional until relatively recent times'; John Cotton in Mackaness (ed.), *The correspondence of John Cotton*, p. 20; R. E. N. Twopenny, *Town life in Australia*, facsimile edition Harmondsworth, 1973 (first published London, 1883), p. 4; 3181/852, 1889/150, James Service, 7/2/1889.

underground sewerage. I do not think this improvement has added to the healthiness of the city, but I suppose it had to be done.⁴²

Problems for pedestrians came not so much from the condition of the pavement as from extraneous impediments such as pavement lights or gratings. While footpaths were essentially pedestrian space, they were intrinsically connected to the premises that abutted them. In 1890, a refrigerating works in Bourke Street West was permitted to set trolley rails across and flush with the footpath. Many other buildings, particularly hotels, warehouses and professional residences whose cellars, basements or kitchens lay under the street level, required areas to be constructed in the footpaths to provide light or air to their buildings or to admit goods. By the mid 1880s, new prismatic pavement lights were preferred by the City Surveyor to the old system of iron gratings. In 1894, a boy named Maynard Tidd lacerated his leg when he fell through a hotel cellar grating at the corner of Bourke and King streets, while two year old Mary Richardson died when she fell 10 feet into a cellar protected only by two iron bars in front of the West Melbourne Coffee Palace. By the turn of the century, footpath gratings for barrels of beer and cases of spirits to be lowered into hotel cellars were being discouraged. Pavement lights were a boon to subterranean residents, yet they could also be a liability, as pedestrians were said to 'ruthlessly destroy the glass by unnecessary stamping':⁴³

It has become a practice with boys who deliver goods on hand-trucks for several city firms (chiefly fruiterers) to wheel their trucks on the footpaths and this action besides damaging considerably the glass lights so that they are neither water-tight nor dust proof, creates a startling noise that interferes with our business and is a serious menace to health.⁴⁴

⁴² Hume Nisbet, *A colonial tramp*, vol. 1, London, 1891, p. 89.

⁴³ 3181/885, 1908/2130, Petition, G. Appleton and others, 22/5/1908.

⁴⁴ 3181/880, 1907/644, Oakley Adams and Co., Wine Merchants, Collins Street, 12/2/1907. See also 1913/5434, Palatine Insurance Co., Collins Street, 3/9/1913: 'The worst feature...is the nerve racking and deafening noise inflicted on those who are obliged to pursue their vocations in basements.' A number of offenders were fined for wheeling trucks on footpaths contrary to sub-section 2 section 5 *Police Offences Act* 2422.

Protruding manhole covers or worn flags around an electric light cover in 1909 were a further hazard for the unwary.

While standing at the corner of Elizabeth & Collins St this morning we were quite surprised to see several pedestrians stumbling over an iron or steel door laid in the middle of the footpath. One old gentleman, whom we noted amongst the others, stumbled over this obstruction, made a most remarkable recovery in endeavouring to regain his equilibrium and in doing so made one of the most remarkable acrobatic feat[s] that it has been our lot to witness.⁴⁵

With the footpath spatially discriminated from the carriageway, and with the continued regulation of general street traffic, the footpath itself became a discrete and exclusive physical setting controlled by a growing regulatory framework based on both practical and social reasoning. The social use of the footpath was not only defined in relation to the carriageway, but was also constantly negotiated in terms of its relationship to the buildings which fringed it. From the 1840s to the 1920s, a transformation of this interface through municipal and social regulation resulted in increasing separation and segregation at the boundary between assumed public and private space. The footpath was transformed – in relation to the adjacent street architecture of the verandah, the demands of the shopkeeper for advertising, the development of city ordinances and discretionary regulations restricting freedom and choice of public movement, and class and gendered classifications of space.

By the 1860s, by-laws had been introduced relating to the construction of awnings over footways and the piling of goods on verandahs.⁴⁶ Verandahs were not solely pleasing or practical elements in the street architecture; while they could enforce physical regularity and provide shelter from sun and rain, they could also interrupt the free-flowing circulation of foot passengers and hinder access to shops and properties, attracting and harbouring groups of people whose very congregation defined them as a nuisance. By the turn of

⁴⁵ 3181/888, 1909/2495, J. J. Allen and George Ellis, 15/6/1909.

⁴⁶ By-Law No. 41 'for regulating the erection of awnings posts and other structures on and over footways (1859); By-Law No. 48 'to prevent the attaching or piling of goods or other matters or things to or upon awnings or verandahs over public footways' (1862).

the century, idle men leaning against street verandah posts had become, in the eyes of the middle-class shopper, the ‘Verandah Post Evil’:

It is notable that the north side of Bourke Street, which is verandahless, is not infested by ‘proppers,’...as a remedy for the obstruction and inconvenience arising from the habits of the leaning up fraternity, it might be well for the Council to remove all kerb verandah supports...The constabulary do not get any satisfaction by hunting the spineless ones from post to post, (the expression ‘pillar to post’ is inapplicable)...My wife (who is not a nervous woman, but sensitively alive to the alert attentions of the spicing pest), states that an afternoon’s shopping in the city is robbed of any pleasure it might otherwise possess by the apprehensive conviction that while looking into the shop windows her handbag etc. are being ‘sized up’...Last Wednesday there were enough idlers either singly or in clusters between Elizabeth Street and the Opera house to form a continuous rank from the Post Office to Russell Street, and near the corner of Swanston Street I noticed an elderly lady have to step right out on to the roadway to get past a group on the footpath...The group on the footpath were not moving, but stood still – anchored – absolutely transfixed to the spot.⁴⁷

While the general and public right to stop was being replaced by the right to shop, the verandah also performed other social functions, such as a prop in the theatre of the street, a viewing platform for processions and displays. The spate of celebratory occasions around the turn of the century (Mafeking Relief Holiday, Royal Visit and Federation), led to the introduction of stricter regulation of this traditional positioning. The practice not only damaged the verandahs themselves, but was seen as a danger to life and limb, and By-Law No. 106 of 1901 prohibited people from climbing up verandah posts, or standing or sitting on verandahs. To obviate the damage to verandahs from climbing spectators, enterprising property owners erected balconies or stands over their verandahs as viewing platforms, to which they charged admission on celebratory occasions.

⁴⁷ 3181/873, 1903/109, J. Cheffins, 13/1/1903.

The pillar verandah and the portico had by this time been classified as anachronisms in a city that demanded clarified architectural lines and no obstructions to free circulation. Just as architectural and aesthetic control of the verandah had implications for the social use of the public street, so too the arcade and the covered gangway challenged the rigid geometry of the gridiron plan, facilitating at the same time greater mobility and stricter social control of what were only semi-public domains linked intrinsically to a burgeoning consumer culture. Covered ways, gangways, and bridges constructed in lanes to connect warehouses and stores, had to be made of inflammable material. The resumption of private laneways and rights-of-way corrupted the availability and accessibility of public space in the city.⁴⁸

The tension between the commercial demands of the shopkeeper, and the public right to the footpath as social space, led to a range of restrictions which changed the public landscape of the streets at the expense not only of pedestrian heterogeneity, but in some cases of the individual and intimate relationships between shopkeepers and the space fronting their premises. Shop signs were traditional urban accoutrements, performing the function not only of street advertising, but of locational and community signification. By the mid 1860s, though such signs were very popular in Melbourne, the MCC discouraged them on the grounds of architectural unity, progress, and public safety. By-Law No. 48 of 1862 regulated overhanging signs and flags, but by 1867 there were 175 signs not connected with verandahs, projecting over city footways, some signs up to five feet long, others taking up the entire width of the footway. A list of shop signs in 1867 indicates the types of signs in vogue:

⁴⁸ Queen's Arcade was opened in 1853 and ran from Lonsdale Street to Little Bourke Street. Block Arcade was opened in 1893, and by 1923 Melbourne's arcades included Empire Arcade (246 Flinders Street), The Block (Collins and Elizabeth streets), Collins Court (Little Collins Street), Centreway (Collins Street), Display Block (313 Little Collins Street), Howey House (Collins Street), Royal Arcade (Little Collins, Elizabeth and Bourke streets), Queen's Walk (Collins and Swanston streets). For a history of arcades, see *Household Words* 7, 169, 18 June 1853, pp. 376-382, 'Arcadia'. On the arcade and consumer culture see Hecksher, *Open spaces*, p. 338; Nicholas Green, *The spectacle of nature: landscape and bourgeois culture in nineteenth-century France*, Manchester, 1990, pp. 23-25; Kostof, *The city assembled*, pp. 230-231; Susan Buck-Morss, *The dialectics of seeing: Walter Benjamin and the arcades project*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989, pp. 39, 83; on building protrusions, see Kostof, *The city assembled*, p. 201.

the pawnbroker's balls, the barber's pole, the pestle and mortar, and the large boot of the bootmaker. The Council's new regulations classified such traditional signs as objectionable, obstructive, and inimical to the street architecture.⁴⁹

Shop signs were not the only private intrusion into the public space of the streets. The cheapest and most ancient mode of commercial advertising had always been for shopkeepers to expose their goods for sale in front of their premises. The exposing of goods for sale on footpaths or hung on doorways or verandah posts was common practice from the earliest days of the settlement. While some complaints were registered against the practice in the 1850s, it was again the late 1860s that saw burgeoning nuisance perception. Boxes which had been fixed beneath shop windows for displaying goods, popular up to the 1860s, were now seen as gross obstructions to the footpaths. While police were reluctant to take action against shopkeepers for hanging articles on verandah posts, the 1860s and 1870s saw the gradual retraction of goods to indoor window display: complaints were received from neighbours against shops exposing baths, coppers, ovens, and wheelbarrows filled with goods on footpaths and gutters, while exposing goods for sale was popularly practised by city drapers and second-hand clothes dealers.⁵⁰

The architectural features of the city building line, and the use of the public street for advertising by adjacent enterprises, had implications for the social classification of space both in relation to class territories and to the contest between the pedestrian and the shopkeeper for the street. From the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the developing technologies of the plate-

⁴⁹ Ambrose Heal, *The sign boards of old London shops*, London, 1988 (first published 1947); 3181/826, Inspector of Nuisances, 18/7/1867; 3181/826, 1867. Apart from flags and signboards, other signs included: large key and suspended bell; imitation sea-chest; imitation hat suspended; imitation man; clock; wire cage suspended; large imitation spectacles; imitation fish and fishing rod; anchor suspended; samples of zinc work; chimney sweep's sign.

⁵⁰ 3181/653, 1859/743, Michael T. Gason, Elizabeth Street, 25/8/1859; 3181/822, Henry Dwight, Bourke Street, 13/7/1863; 3181/830, Parker and Company, Little Bourke Street, 20/11/1871; 3181/834, 1876/531, A. Dempster, Post Office Place, 2/5/1876. In 1881, a gondola was exposed for sale opposite the Exchange in Collins Street West — 3181/839, 1881/857, 8/7/81; 1912/6646, 28/10/1912 — gladstone Bags, dress baskets and tents suspended over footpath.

glass window, air-conditioning, and electricity, in effect closed off the shop's interior from the exterior world. Municipal concern to create an unobstructed public corridor hastened the growing impermeability of this interface. The streets were cleared of perceived obstructions, turned into pure forms which, though easier to navigate, were now becoming untantalising in their homogeneity. The shopkeepers' response was to turn to the interior, and the developing techniques of the window display, artistic artificial lighting, and the department store, lured the pedestrian off what had become a socially sterile zone, a viewing platform.⁵¹ By the 1880s, the window and the door were more explicitly used to separate and selectively re-unite space, in effect replacing the kerb as the potent social threshold.⁵²

The street was being increasingly freed of obstruction and given over to circulatory function, but the pedestrian – now appropriately in motion, not

⁵¹ In 1862, 'The shop-windows, mostly of plate-glass, present a brilliant appearance' (*Illustrated Melbourne Post*, 25 April 1862). New ornamental shop-windows were introduced from the 1870s, symbolising progress: "“O tempora, O mores”!...the numerous plate-glass fronts, within which are so temptingly displayed silk goods, and abundance of jewellery and racing cups, with every article of utility or “vertu” — all attest to the progress the colony has made' (William Brackley Wildey, *Australia and the Oceanic region*, Melbourne, 1876, pp. 234-5). On the department store, see for example: Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in dreams: fashion and modernity*, London, 1985, p. 150; Richard Cobb, *People and places*, Oxford, 1985, pp. 163-178; Tracy C. Davis, 'Theatrical antecedents of the mall that ate downtown', *Journal of Popular Culture* 24, 4 (Spring 1991), pp. 1-15; Donald J. Olsen, *The growth of Victorian London*, London, 1976, pp. 122-125; Gail Reekie, *Temptations: sex and selling in the department store*, St Lucia, 1993. While show-cases attached to shop-fronts were discouraged in the streets (1913/756, 6/2/1913), the impact of 'the gospel of electricity' and new plate-glass technology in the 1910s heralded a new era in the art of shop window design and illumination. Melbourne's Electrical Engineer toured Europe and America in 1912, remarking on the lighting of shop windows in Berlin and New York. In 1914, Joe Taylor, a tailor of 109 Bourke Street, expressed the need for more modern shop fitting: 'For some time past I have noticed that the business which used to come to this end of Bourke Street is gradually drifting towards the centre of the city. I am of the opinion that the decrease is caused in some measure to [sic] the shop windows, which are not modern enough to make an attractive alternative display to arrest the drift' (City Electrical Engineer's Notes on Tour Abroad, April 1912, 1914/5063, 11/8/1914).

⁵² Robin Evans, 'Figures, portes et passages', *Urbi* 5 (1982), pp. XXIII-XLI.

idling, flaunting, spitting or soliciting, performing only the rituals of the window shopper or the promenader – was not completely immune from municipal regulation. In 1863, suggestions were made that pedestrians should keep to certain sides of some city streets on account of the footpaths being insufficiently wide to cater for Saturday night traffic, and on the occasion of the royal marriage celebrations in May, a public notice was issued regulating pedestrian and traffic arrangements. A suggestion was again put forward for the 1867 royal visit that Melbourne pedestrians should adopt the English practice of keeping to the right hand side of footways. A decade later the system was again put before the Council: ‘It must be obvious to all traversing the streets the inconvenience of walking all over the path way there being no system laid down to guide foot passengers similar to that in London & other large towns.’⁵³ Regulations in 1879 advised pedestrians to keep to the right on footways,⁵⁴ but by the late 1880s, the rule of the road was not only defied by vehicles on the carriageway, but the rule of the footway was being totally ignored by pedestrians.

Any one keeping to his right in going down Collins-street will have to pause before bevies of ladies, who pursue the even tenor of their way, never dreaming that they obstruct the path by walking on the left side. Coming up it is more than probable that he will be jostled by men, to whom the very outside of the pavement seems the easiest for progression. But Swanston-street is worse...The people straggle over the whole pavement, and he will have to thread his way through them as if he were playing a game of blind-man’s buff...Pedestrian traffic forms a confusion that may be picturesque, but is certainly uncomfortable.⁵⁵

⁵³ 3181/835, 1877/1585, James Smallpage, 19/11/1877.

⁵⁴ Clause 2 of the 1879 Regulations made by the Council of the City of Melbourne, ‘for keeping order upon and preventing obstruction of the carriage and footways of the said City.’

⁵⁵ 3181/845, 1886/2781, William White, 6/3/1886. The suggestion was put to the Council that placards be erected, as in London, requiring pedestrians to keep to the right (3181/849, 1888/2872, John Russell, 12/12/1888). Russell suggested that the rules of the road (keep to the left) and footpath (keep to the right) should be taught in schools, and that all officials should be made to observe them, including telegraph messengers and police who were some of the worst offenders. He also made an interesting point in relation to the terminology of the footpath, noting the confusion that might be

In 1921, it was considered that pedestrians should no longer have their backs to the traffic, since during busy traffic periods they inevitably and dangerously spilled onto the roadway. Two safety zones were delimited at the corners of Swanston and Flinders streets, and Elizabeth and Flinders streets. Jay-walking (noted as an American term) was formally discouraged, as was the habit of pedestrians standing on the roadway waiting for trams. Mechanical traffic lights were already in use in some American cities, but in Melbourne the white-gloved hand signals of the traffic police were favoured for their ability to react to the contingencies of street traffic flow.⁵⁶

By the 1920s, the city crowd had been pushed to the side of the street; the demands were firstly for a clear carriageway – ‘foot passenger traffic shall fit in with new conditions of things brought in with the noiseless swift moving

experienced between the words ‘pedestrian’ and ‘foot passenger’: “‘Pedestrians’ would not do as a notice your average colonial only considers people who walk or run races as such, and does not connect ordinary foot passengers with the word at all.’ As many as 100 plates were erected by the MCC at this time, but many were soon defaced or torn down (3181/850, W. H. Bilton, 28/7/1888). In 1889, calls were again made for the erection of signs to facilitate footpath locomotion as ‘a majority of our fellow citizens and visitors wander at their own sweet will all over the paths’ (3181/851, 22/8/1889). By 1902, the need for signs was again noted. By 1912, the *Argus* noted that pedestrians had ‘now got pretty well into the way of keeping to the right’ (*Argus*, 6 December 1912). In 1914, however, ‘The legend “Keep to the right” finds no more obedience than the injunction not to spit on the footpaths’ (*Age*, 30 April 1914).

⁵⁶ In 1922, while authorities in London and Perth felt that it would be difficult to alter traditional habits, the system of keep-to-the-left was working in Sydney. Victoria Police supported the change: ‘The traffic in Melbourne has “speeded up” and will “get faster” to such a degree that it will not be safe for pedestrians to step off footpaths on to roadways with their backs to the traffic as in times past’ (1922/2918). By 1925, the rule of the footpath had been changed to ‘keep to the left’, with white lines painted down the middle of footpaths (1926/2447, 24/5/1926; *Argus*, 1 December 1920). In the second two quarters of 1923, 1439 and 261 persons were cautioned for jay-walking, with 36 and 19 prosecutions being instigated (1923/5005; see also 1923/3393; Boyce, *Australia and New Zealand illustrated*: ‘Pedestrians must cross at right angles — the law frowns on “jay walkers”’).

motor traffic'⁵⁷ – and secondly for a footpath free of the possibilities for halting, where the spatial or social possibilities of the verandah-post, the hitching-post, the street-stall were banished, where the footpath was a place for getting to rather than going. ‘All day long,’ lamented the proponents of the unobstructed street, “knots of men and women are allowed to stand talking around the various sporting clubs, picture shows, drapery establishments, and the “Block,” much to the annoyance of anybody who wishes to get about the city streets in their daily duties.’⁵⁸

The unruly crowd that gathered around the political speaker or the religious preacher, popular in the 1860s around the Eastern Market in Bourke Street and in the slum lanes of the 1890s, was pushed out of the central city to the river banks and the indoor venues. While processions and marches weekly possessed the grid in cultural, religious and political symbolism, the congregation of ‘crowds of idle and disorderly persons to the disturbance or annoyance of the neighbourhood’ was discouraged both through municipal and police ordinance and surveillance, and in the deliberate lack of provision of a public forum or square to replace the market places of the first decades of the settlement. Outside the Hall of Commerce in Collins Street from the 1860s to the 1880s, crowds of idlers and loiterers gathered in ‘unnecessary assemblage’, forcing ‘respectable’ citizens to walk in the middle of the road or to take to the other side of the street.⁵⁹

Most critically, the crowd was a threat to customers gaining access to shops, the *raison d’être* of the city.⁶⁰ In 1879 Council Regulations prohibited standing or loitering on carriageways or footpaths and invested police with

⁵⁷ ‘A new order for pedestrians’, *Local Government*, 25 April 1923, in 1924/2419, 21/5/1924.

⁵⁸ *Midnight Sun*, 12 June 1921, in 1921/5269, 6/9/1921.

⁵⁹ 3181/653, 1862/635, Police Department, 13/12/1862; 3181/628, Police Department, 10/4/1866; 3181/653, 1866/2158, Police Department, 29/10/1866; 3181/653, 1866/2101, Thomas Shaw, Collins Street, 19/10/1866; 3181/838, 1880/1718, 14/12/1880.

⁶⁰ 3181/873, 1903/3358, Francis Longmore and Co., 28/9/1903; 1914/1107, B. H. Altson, 20/2/1914 — complaint of youths loitering at the corner of Elizabeth and Collins streets, particularly around midday.

authority to move on offenders.⁶¹ The 1880s marked a turning point in the circulatory battle over the footpath. The new regulations signalled the clear intention of the Council and the police on move-on duty to stamp out traditional sociable uses of the street which entailed stationary congregation. In 1886, actors complained of the congregation and disturbance of 'strangers to the locality' in Little Collins Street, whose singing and shouting attracted crowds of revellers: 'So great is the uproar that some of your Petitioners who are professionally engaged as theatrical performers find themselves unable to satisfactorily perform their parts'.⁶² The following year, crowds in Bourke Street were attracted to a party of showmen at the corner of Market Street, 'the chief attraction is a so called fortune teller called "Gipsy Eliza" and a deformed man'.⁶³ In the early 1850s, Mossman had proudly described in Bourke Street on a summer evening the 'crowds of noisy urchins...playing jing-a-ring'.⁶⁴ But by the 1880s, the discouragement of the use of the street for public recreation and performance, as theatre or playground,⁶⁵ was

⁶¹ Regulations made by the Council of the City of Melbourne 'for keeping order upon and preventing obstruction of the carriage and footways of the said City'. In 1886, the Council wished to prevent public assembly in Market Square, but the police could not act unless riotous conduct occurred (3181/68, 1886/3669). A further move-on regulation to prevent loitering or standing in public places was passed in July 1897 'for keeping order in and preventing obstruction of the carriageways, footways and public places of this City' (1912/5249, 26/8/1912).

⁶² 3181/846, 1886/4827, Petition, 29/10/1886.

⁶³ 3181/848, 1887/1348, Mr Evans, 30/6/1887 — 'A highly coloured pictorial canvas hanging from the parapet outside attracts a considerable number of street loafers every evening to the detriment of the respectable shopkeepers in the neighbourhood'; 1911/1926, 29/3/1911 — a crowd in Elizabeth Street attracted outside Egyptian Hall by a musical instrument phonograph placed on the footpath to accompany performers going through tricks.

⁶⁴ Mossman, *The gold regions of Australia*, p. 83.

⁶⁵ On playing in the streets see: 3181/631, Anonymous, 10/7/1876 — 'Mobs of 40 to 50 boys may be seen playing football in the middle of Lonsdale Street at any time of the day, unconcerned of the passers-by, who may congratulate themselves at their escaping them unhurt'; 1911/4166, 19/7/1911 — lads from factories and shops playing games in lanes during lunch hour. On the nuisance of youths hitching rides on the back of lorries, see 1916/1623, 18/3/1916.

directly attacked by the exponents not only of free circulation but of self-improvement, respectability and rational recreation.⁶⁶

The discouragement of loitering affected the provision of what came to be demanded as an essential civic facility – public seating. Window sills of city buildings were set with iron spikes as a private initiative to discourage sitters, and the availability of municipal street seating was seen by the 1890s as contrary to the concept of preventing street obstruction and loitering. The discretionary power of the move-on laws made them as much a means of mapping a specific moral geography and a weapon against undesirable social elements as a means of stirring the circulatory stew. Just as the physical determinism of the slum-clearance movement sought to clear the visible manifestations of poverty and moral threat, the fear of physical confrontation had a range of people – the beggar, the vagrant, the prostitute, the idle, the juvenile, the insane and the elderly – swept up in the net of discretionary regulation.⁶⁷ Innocent but visible presence suggesting vice in public space

⁶⁶ J. M. Golby & A. W. Purdue, *The civilisation of the crowd: popular culture in England 1750-1900*, London, 1984.

⁶⁷ Rob Sindall, *Street violence in the nineteenth century: media panic or real danger?* Leicester, 1990. See also John C. Schneider, 'Public order and the geography of the city: crime, violence, and the police in Detroit, 1845-1875', *Journal of Urban History* 4, 2, February 1978, p. 183.

On beggars: Freeman, *Lights and shadows*, pp. 122-133. Sub-section 5 of section 40 of the *Police Offences Act* 1890 provided for the imprisonment of persons wandering about or placing themselves in any public place to beg. The law was not strictly enforced in relation to blind people, and with the operation of the old age and invalid pension after the turn of the century, the nuisance was reduced (1916/5330, 6/11/1916).

On prostitutes: Chris McConville, 'Outcast Melbourne: social deviance in the city, 1880-1914', MA Thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1974; Chris McConville, 'The location of Melbourne's prostitutes, 1870-1920', *Historical Studies* 19, 74 (April 1980), pp. 86-98; Margaret Arnot, 'Prostitution and the state in Victoria, 1890-1914', MA Thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1986. See also Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of eros: New York City, prostitution, and the commercialization of sex, 1790-1920*, New York, 1992; Lucia Zednar, *Women, crime, and custody in Victorian England*, Oxford, 1991; Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian society: women, class and the state*, Cambridge, 1985.

was regulated, while the true perpetrators of crime often went unpursued and unpunished.⁶⁸ Street life came to be viewed with suspicion, as deviant and pathological, demanding regulation and control.⁶⁹

Crowds were an anathema in streets rationalised for the circulation of traffic; crowds, that is, that were brooding, idle and hindering, a threat to both respectability and appearances and to the free flow of traffic. Other crowds could be welcomed – the rush hour crowd, purposeful though lack-lustre, for whom the speed of going was a prime concern. In Melbourne's first decades, the demographic and spatial characteristics of the town enabled the

On vagrancy: Susanne Elizabeth Davies, 'Vagrancy and the Victorians: the social construction of the vagrant in Melbourne, 1880-1907', PhD Thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1990.

On the general disappearance of children from the streets — the development of juvenile trading restrictions, the classification of the street arab; the development of adolescence, compulsory school laws and education acts, the child-saving movements — see: Ruskin Teeter, 'The travails of 19th-century urban youth as a precondition to the invention of modern adolescence' *Adolescence* XXIII, 9 (Spring 1988), pp. 15-18; Ruskin Teeter, 'Coming of age on the city streets in 19th-century America', *Adolescence* XXIII, 92 (Winter 1988), pp. 909-912; Phillippe Ariès, 'L'enfant et la rue: de la ville à l'anti-ville', *Urbi*, II (December 1979), pp. 3-14; Sue Fabian & Morag Loh, *Children in Australia: an outline history*, Melbourne, 1980; Chris McConville, 'Outcast children in Marvellous Melbourne' in Guy Featherstone (ed.), *The colonial child*, Melbourne, 1981, pp. 39-48; Christine Stansell, 'Women, children, and the uses of the streets: class and gender conflict in New York City, 1850-1860', *Feminist Studies* 8, 2 (Summer 1982), pp. 309-335; Albert E. Parr, 'The child in the city: urbanity and the urban scene' in Stephen Kaplan & Rachel Kaplan (eds), *Humanscape: environments for people*, Michigan, 1982, pp. 352-358; Graeme Davison, 'The city-bred child and urban reform in Melbourne 1900-1940' in Peter Williams (ed.), *Social process and the city*, Sydney, 1983, pp. 143-174; Françoise Barret-Ducrocq, *Love in the time of Victoria: sexuality, class and gender in nineteenth-century London*, tr. John Howe, London, 1991, pp. 27-28; David Nasaw, *Children of the city: at work and at play*, Garden City, New York, 1985.

68 Jeffrey S. Adler, 'Streetwalkers, degraded outcasts, and good-for-nothing huzzies: women and the dangerous class in antebellum St. Louis', *Journal of Social History* 25, 4 (Summer 1992), p. 737.

69 John Edwards et al., 'Street life, ethnicity, and social policy' in George Gaskell & Robert Benewick (eds), *The crowd in contemporary Britain*, London, 1987, p. 107.

maintenance of primary social contacts in public life. The street stall vendor, the delivery boy, the local policeman on point duty or beat, peopled a familiar territory that was divided into definable precincts and neighbourhoods. The grid's space had become place as it assumed symbolic and social definition.⁷⁰ By the 1880s, however, the implications of suburbanisation and the changing function of the city centre were reflected in demands for free traffic flow and social respectability. The peak hour citizens were becoming strangers again and the city centre, once a site of varied social experience, was homogenised and commodified, once more a placeless grid in an unfamiliar territory.

The business-like crowd, the go-ahead and thronging urban swarm which constantly stirred around the city's streets, could be not only exciting, awe-inspiring, even beautiful, but was taken as a sure sign of progress and success. By late century, Bourke Street on a Saturday or Sunday night could be 'black with pedestrians', while Collins Street at the same time was deserted; Bourke Street was the 'favourite promenade of the masses... The crowd pitch upon a particular street and take possession of it.' At mid-morning in Elizabeth Street in the 1900s, Bullen was 'staggered at the density of the crowds...the people were thick as bees swarming; not loafing about, either, but moving as if they had business somewhere.'⁷¹

By 1870, this go-ahead and refined crowd had become not just a sign of progress, but an end in itself, an objectification of the urban gaze:

During any fine afternoon Bourke Street is thronged with pedestrians; but in the evening, and especially on Saturday nights, when the lamps and shop fronts are in full blaze of gas light, one sees, on looking down the street from the Houses of Parliament, an endless concourse of people crowding this great thoroughfare – a

⁷⁰ Irwin Altman & Ervin H. Zube, *Public places and spaces*, New York, 1989, 'Introduction', p. 2.

⁷¹ J. Ewing Ritchie, *An Australian ramble or a summer in Australia*, London, 1890, p. 90; Nat Gould, *Town and bush*, facsimile edition, Harmondsworth, 1974 (first published London, 1896), p. 127-8. See also Fergus Hume, *The mystery of a hansom cab*, Melbourne, 1971 (first published 1887), p. 98: 'BOURKE STREET is always more crowded than Collins Street, especially at night. The theatres are there, and of course there is invariably a large crowd collected under the electric lights'; Frank T. Bullen, *Advance Australia*, London, 1907, p. 65.

spectacle which is enhanced by the glare of lamps which fringe the vista on both sides – and the buzz and hum of many voices. If you want to see a crowd as dense and as motley as that of Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road combined – go to Bourke Street, Melbourne.⁷²

The crowd, though in reality purged of the deviant, became an ideal of egalitarianism; a purified object, more particularly, of male observation:

In Collins, Bourke, Swanston and Elizabeth Streets, on a fine afternoon may be seen...hosts of ladies flitting about in the most airy and fascinating style – fluttering like so many butterflies in the sunshine – some very pretty, but all interesting to look at, though generally having pale complexions. As to their dresses, I am at a loss to describe them – so great is the variety of tint and texture. I have seen the 'Row,' in Hyde Park, and Regent Street in London; the Champs Elysées in Paris; the great square of St. Mark's, Venice; the Corso and the Pincian at Rome; and the Toledo at Naples; and in the matter of dress, I would undertake to match the ladies of Melbourne against the fashionable dames who frequent the promenades in question...There was the diminutive and dainty bit of a bonnet perched on the top of the head; there were graceful robes of light texture and varied hue; there were elegant but flimsy toilettes in white, artistically trimmed with a mazy outline of blue.⁷³

If Bourke Street could lay claim to being the Saturday and Sunday night feature, 'lightened in many places by the presence of the ladies of the *demi-monde*, who flaunt about in gorgeous robes of the brightest colours', the Block on the shady side of Collins Street from Swanston to Elizabeth streets was by the 1870s the fashionable promenade, where it was 'a point of principle with the female portion of the "Upper Ten" of Melbourne, to display themselves every day'.⁷⁴

⁷² A Colonist, *Victoria*, p. 23.

⁷³ Ibid, pp. 60-62.

⁷⁴ Hume, *The mystery of a hansom cab*, p. 98; Booth, *Another England*, pp. 269-270. See also Freeman, *Lights and shadows*, p. 78.

The streets of the mid 1870s were ‘thronged with handsome women, veritable denizens of the soil, fashionably and really tastefully attired, “doing the block,” patrolling Collins-street’.⁷⁵ As in Hyde Park or Rotten Row, strict rules of social behaviour applied.⁷⁶ Yet the characterisation of women ‘patrolling’ the streets, which ironically mirrored the terminology applied to the prostitutes’ street-soliciting, falsely empowered them with a self-determination about their being public which they simply did not have to the same extent as men.⁷⁷ Outside Collins Street’s strict spatial and temporal confines of respectability, women risked deviating from the socially acceptable.⁷⁸ This was the public city turned into a patriarchal domain where the ubiquitous male stood for the citizen, where the objectified female and the shop-window display featured against the backdrop of municipal urbanity and classical idealism, and a conscious replication of European ideals of civility and progress:

Collins Street, where the fashionable people parade on a Saturday morning ‘doing the block,’ where you will see women whose equals for physical beauty, stature, and grace of carriage are nowhere else to be seen in the world; they all look goddesses as they glide along – Greek ideals, who have only discarded the

⁷⁵ Wildey, *Australia and the Oceanic region*, pp. 234-5.

⁷⁶ Barret-Ducrocq, *Love in the time of Victoria*, p. 9.

⁷⁷ On ‘public woman as fallen woman’, see Deborah Epstein Nord, ‘The urban peripatetic: spectator, streetwalker, woman writer’, *Nineteenth-century Literature* 43, 3 (December 1991), pp. 351-375. Nord explores the trope of the fallen woman in urban commentary, arguing that ‘a distinctly female urban vision...involves a consciousness of transgression and trespassing, of vexed sexuality, of the female body as commodity, of the unreliability of class boundaries, of the need for disguise or some form of incognito, and, most importantly, of the ultimate unavoidability of the primacy of the male gaze and its power to objectify and eroticise’ (pp. 365-366).

⁷⁸ ‘Any wandering about which could not be explained by shopping or some other necessary activity came to be perceived as a factor or sign of doubtful morality’ (Barret-Ducrocq, *Love in the time of Victoria*, p. 10); ‘Prostitution was indeed the female version of flanerie. Yet sexual difference makes visible the privileged position of males within public space...the flaneur was simply the name of a man who loitered; but all women who loitered risked being seen as whores’ (Susan Buck-Morss, ‘The flaneur, the sandwichman and the whore: the politics of loitering’, *New German Critique* 39, Fall 1986, p. 119).

simplicity of costume for the more gorgeous creations of Paris and her prince of dressmakers... The densest crowd must always appear dwarfed in the vast spaces of those roomy streets. The shop-windows far surpass those of London and Paris for magnitude and display. As we stroll along inhaling the delicate perfumes from the floating draperies, gazing upon the beautiful and refined faces, we wonder if these super-refined and languid affectations – those cigarette-smoking and eye-beglazed woman-hunters, can be the descendants of the Spartan and rugged makers of this mighty land. It is a hard matter to find space, even in these wide spaces, for a thought of the black-fellows and the wilds of fifty years ago.⁷⁹

Even as spatial and temporal limitations separated appropriate from inappropriate, respectable from deviant, in the voyeurism of the crowd the respectable woman herself was fetishised as male fantasy.⁸⁰ The Collins Street Block was in many respects simply a microcosm of the gendered 'asymmetry' of the city as a whole, of the separation of the spheres and the inequality between the public and the private roles of women.⁸¹ The social

⁷⁹ Nisbet, *A colonial tramp*, pp. 88-89. See also William Cuff, *Sunny memories of Australasia*, London, 1904, p. 65: 'The ladies are there in plentiful numbers, and in every colour of the rainbow are they dressed...the blouses are as variegated as they can by any means be made; and oh! the hats and bonnets beggar all description!'

⁸⁰ Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in dreams*, Chapter 7, 'Fashion and city life', p. 136.

⁸¹ Karen A. Franck & Lynn Paxson, 'Women and urban public space: research, design, and policy issues.' in Altman & Zube (eds), *Public places and spaces*, pp. 121-146. On women and public space, see also Christine Stansell, *City of women: sex and class in New York, 1789-1860*, New York, 1986; Gerda R. Wekerle, 'Women in the urban environment' in Catherine R. Stimpson (ed.), *Women & the American city*, Chicago, 1980, pp. 185-211; Briavel Holcomb, 'Geography and urban women', *Urban Geography* 7, 5 (1986), pp. 448-456; Matrix, *Making space: women and the man-made environment*, London, 1984; Lyn Lofland, 'Women and urban public space', *Women and Environments*, 6, 2, April 1984, pp. 12-14; Christine Stansell, 'Women, children, and the uses of the streets: class and gender conflict in New York City, 1850-1860.' *Feminist Studies* 8, No. 2 (Summer 1982), pp. 309-335; Elizabeth S. Cohen, 'Honor and gender in the streets of early modern Rome', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XXII, 4 (Spring 1992), pp. 597-625; David A. Karp, Gregory P. Stone & William C. Yoels, *Being urban: a sociology of city life*, 2nd edition, New York, 1991, 'Women in cities: the absence of a presence', pp. 133-154.

sequestration of the footpath as, in effect, an androcentric site – while at worst making public space off-limits to women, and at best engendering unease over and alertness to harassment or decorum – reinforced the general assertion that ‘women have not enjoyed, historically...a “freedom of the streets” comparable to that of men.’⁸²

By the early twentieth century, the attention of first wave feminist lobbyists was turned, if not directly towards questioning fundamental sex-role stereotypes, to issues of equality in relation to, for example, public facilities, and women’s claim on public space gained momentum. From the 1830s to the 1850s, women had been a rare enough sight on the streets of the city.⁸³ Many city establishments, such as Spiers and Ponds Café de Paris, did not admit women, and while Kelly remarked in the 1850s that respectable women were not seen in public, their territory was limited to a more restricted range of social settings outside the home compared to men. The streets were ostensibly public zones, but were broken up into a maze of gendered territories: the female zones outside women’s public conveniences or underclothing establishments, often deliberately intruded upon by threatening male presence; the male zones outside the hotel, the barber’s shop, or the cab stand.

⁸² Lofland, ‘Women and urban public space’, p. 13. On the politics of the gaze and the ‘colonisation of women by men in cities’, see also Fell, ‘Penthesilia, perhaps’ in Mark Fisher & Ursula Owen (eds.), *Whose cities?*, London, 1991, p. 77: ‘All women have imprinted in them the basic politics of male territoriality, all women known instinctively what transgresses.’

⁸³ The proportion of males to females: 1841 (8 274 males, 3 464 females), 1854 (155 876 males, 80 900 females), 1881 (451 623 males, 409 943 females), 1921 (754 724 males, 776 556 females). Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians: historical statistics*, Broadway, 1987, pp. 27-28. For contemporary observations, see: William Westgarth, *Personal recollections of early Melbourne and Victoria*, Melbourne, 1888, p. 108 — ‘Ladies and children were comparatively rare objects’; Edward M. Curr, *Recollections of squatting in Victoria*, Melbourne, 1965 (first published 1883), p. 5 — ‘Perhaps the first thing one noticed was the almost total absence of women from the streets, as well as the paucity of old men’; George Stephen, letter 3 July 1855, University Library, Cambridge, England — ‘As to ladies, I have not yet seen one at large. If there are any, I conclude that they are secreted in the bush. They certainly are never visible in Melbourne or its environs.’

where the notoriously bad conduct of men ‘hooting, yelling, and pouting’ at women was well known.⁸⁴

Even after the sex ratio levelled out by the end of the nineteenth century, gender stereotypes continued to be employed to manipulate the public landscape of the streets, and women’s commodity value was recognised in the daily dealings of male rate-payers and their male municipal representatives.⁸⁵ The nuisance of the noise of auctioneer’s bellmen in 1841 necessitated the female purchaser ‘stretching her voice to a roar: – who loves to hear a lady roar?’ In the 1850s, while ‘Men can manage with their long boots to wade through the slush...how ladies contrive to perambulate is to us a perfect marvel’. The noise of boys selling papers and race-cards in 1901 may have been ‘a great annoyance’ to most people, but to ladies in particular, it was deemed to be ‘distressing beyond measure’. The erection of a public urinal could even be charged with offending the respectability of private domestic space: ‘ladies & children sit in the upstairs room and cannot look out of the windows without noticing for what purpose it is used and therefore sufficient to convey ideas of indelicacy to young children.’ The absence of footbridges over certain street corners, the use of back lanes as urinals, the poor condition of footpath and roadway, leaking verandahs – a host of municipal improvements were demanded on the basis of female respectability, the

84 Robert Thorne, ‘Places of refreshment in the nineteenth-century city’ in Anthony D. King (ed.), *Buildings and society: essays on the social development of the built environment*, London, 1980, p. 240; William Kelly, *Life in Victoria*, volume 1, London, 1859, p. 46; Lenore Davidoff & Catherine Hall, ‘The architecture of public and private life: English middle-class society in a provincial town 1780 to 1850’ in D. Fraser & A. Sutcliffe (eds), *The pursuit of urban history*, London, 1983, pp. 327-345; Bookmakers standing outside Ladies’ and Children’s underclothing establishment in Swanston Street causing unpleasantness (3181/865, 1897/943, E. Paterson, 22/3/1897); 3181/332, Louisa O’Brien, 10/10/1862.

85 ‘Woman is never anything but the locus of a more or less competitive exchange between two men, including the competition for the possession of mother earth’ — Luce Irigaray, *This sex which is not one*, tr. Catherine Porter, Ithaca, New York, 1993 (first published in French, 1977), pp. 31-2.

paradox being that the complaints in effect admitted to women's restricted access to public space.⁸⁶

Female respectability could be determined as much through apparel as by location. Prescriptions of fashion – the crinoline, the corset, the trailing dress – not only physically restricted the public woman but emphasised the pursuit of status and the regulation of morality through clothes.⁸⁷ While laws against hat-pins were made for undisputed safety reasons,⁸⁸ proscriptions against wearers of the hobble-skirt in the early 1910s were based not on that fashion's restriction of movement, but on its outrage to decency.⁸⁹ The etiquette of the 1880s had demanded of a lady's street manners strict attendance to conventions:

The true lady walks the street, wrapped in a mantle of proper reserve, so impenetrable that insult and coarse familiarity shrink from her, while she, at the same time, carries with her a congenial atmosphere which attracts all, and puts all at their ease. A lady walks quietly through the streets, seeing and hearing nothing that she ought not to see and hear, recognizing acquaintances with a courteous bow...She is always unobtrusive, never talks loudly, or

⁸⁶ *Port Phillip Patriot*, 8 April 1841; *Australasian Builder*, 19 June 1856; 3181/870, 1901/1534, Thomas Isaac, 6/4/1901; 3181/662, 1878/663, A. Windsor, National Bank of Australasia, Elizabeth Street, 1/6/1878.

⁸⁷ Borsay, *The English urban renaissance*, pp. 237-241; Mariana Valverde, 'The love of finery: fashion and the fallen woman in nineteenth-century social discourse', *Victorian Studies* 32, 2 (Winter 1989), pp. 169-188; Barret-Ducrocq, *Love in the time of Victoria*, p. 11.

⁸⁸ After many accidents including a baby being speared through the eye at Mornington, there were calls for the banning of hatpins which sometimes protruded up to three inches from the crown of ladies' narrow brimmed hats: *Argus*, 8 March 1912 — 'The long hat pin stamps us as a people wanting in one of the graces that adorn life'. By-Law No. 127 was passed in April 1913.

⁸⁹ A man was fined for insulting a woman in Elizabeth Street: 'The crowd was pressing around a woman dressed in a very tight hobble skirt, and several men were hooting and yelling at her...The crowd was so thick that the traffic was held up for a time...She had stated that she was merely waiting for a friend when the crowd collected' (*Argus*, 24 January 1911). The *Argus*, reported on 27 January that legislators in Wisconsin had introduced a bill to ban hobble skirts.

laughs boisterously...She walks along in her own quiet, lady-like way, and by her preoccupation is secure from any annoyance to which a person of less perfect breeding might be subjected...A lady never forms an acquaintance upon the streets, or seeks to attract the attention or admiration of persons of the other sex. To do so would render false her claims to ladyhood, if it did not make her liable to far graver charges.⁹⁰

As long as outward show could distinguish the man or the woman, the discretionary laws of the municipal authority and the laws of correct society held firm. The woman transgressing prescribed proprieties threatened not only her own respectability but the contiguous respectability of those around her:

C. was walking with a quiet sedate bushman, when they were stopped by the fastest girl of the day. Her whole appearance – her air and manner, were so equivocal, there was such an amount of abandon about her, that the stranger from up country was quite taken aback and fancied he should be compromised by standing talking to such a creature in broad daylight. She reminded C. of an evening party at her father's house...Yet this young lady was in the very Bosom of Society!⁹¹

In the same way, the sweep-net of discretionary move-on laws could snare innocent prey as much as genuine threat. A man arrested and charged in 1913 with loitering on the footway in Bourke Street turned out to be a district overseer engaged in conversation with the Council's superintending overseer: 'We was discussing the best way to relay the wood blocks'.⁹²

⁹⁰ *Australian etiquette, or, the rules and usages of the best society in the Australasian colonies, together with their sports, pastimes, games, and amusements*, facsimile edition, Knoxfield, 1980 (first published Melbourne, 1885), pp. 152-153.

⁹¹ Samuel Curtis Candler, Addenda to diary, 1867-8, p. 123, MS La Trobe Library, quoted in Paul de Serville, *Pounds and pedigrees: the upper class in Victoria 1850-80*, South Melbourne, 1991. On cases of mistaken identity, see Nord, 'The urban peripatetic', p. 365, 373.

⁹² 1913/6697, 31/10/1913.

Concerns for the low national birth rate and the spread of venereal diseases led by 1918 to strict surveillance of perceived immorality in streets and parks, and the scapegoating of women as being the fundamental moral and physical pollutants of men.⁹³ ‘Is it not possible’, asked the Reverend Henry Worrall, ‘to have some by-law by which it shall be regarded as an offence for a male and a female to be lying in such proximity to each other as to create suspicion of indecency taking place [?]’ The plight of soldiers at Langwarren Camp suffering from sexually transmitted diseases was ultimately blamed on the brazenness of women in public. The Reverend Henry Worrall wanted the law amended ‘as now I believe there is no power to detain a woman’, and the Reverend J.T. Lewton felt compelled to investigate:

Supposing that we are to go to pieces morally, what is the use of us winning the war...As regards the Streets – I have thrown off my clerical attire and walked through the Streets. We walked down Little Lonsdale Street to see what was actually going on...I saw things going on in the Streets that were disgraceful. I saw people being intercepted and with my own eyes I saw a woman walking away with a man. We followed them at a distance and with a pair of glasses observed that they were actually engaged in immoral communication...Some friends of mine met a young fellow they knew at Langwarren and said, ‘Well, Frank, how did you come here,’ he said, ‘I will tell you – these young girls go so far that a man has to be more than human to withstand the temptation.⁹⁴

By the First World War, the motor car with its promise of freedom, modernity, and power, had decisively begun to reshape the city.⁹⁵ But a history of concerns about speed, congestion, orderliness, circulation, the

⁹³ On the prostitute as the symbolic synthesis of urban pathology, and Judith Walcowitz’s assertion that women were in fact victims of male pollution, see Nord, ‘The urban peripatetic’, pp. 362-365, citing Walcowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian society*, p. 146.

⁹⁴ *Age*, 15 June 1918, 3 July 1918; *Argus*, 15 June 1918, 17 June 1918, 3 July 1918; *Herald*, 2 July 1918.

⁹⁵ See also Gerald T. Bloomfield, ‘No parking here to corner: London reshaped by the automobile, 1911-61’, *Urban History Review/Revue d’histoire urbaine* XVIII, 2 (October 1989), pp. 139-158.

expulsion of the stationary or the obstructive, and uniformity of aesthetic and architecture – all of these things merely made it easier for the car to take over what was becoming an evacuated social space. In the chaos and congestion that marked the early twentieth-century city, it was the pedestrian not the car that was problematised: ‘As far as the foot traffic is concerned,’ noted the *Argus* in 1914, ‘the council admits that up to the present it has been allowed to manage itself.’⁹⁶ Such an attitude denied a legacy of municipal and social hegemony that had transformed the public use of the city streets, and cleared the way for a new era of regulation which would further diminish the pedestrians’ rights of public passage. The shopper ‘burdened with parcels and a child clinging to her dress’ who, rather than crossing at a street corner, dodged ‘bicycles, butchers’ carts, delivery vans, motors, tram cars’, received no sympathy.⁹⁷ The general confusion was now being couched in terms of manners and progress, pedestrians being upbraided both for their courtesy and primitiveness:

We are badly educated in civic manners and social consideration...The notion that the roadway belongs to the pedestrian, and that he can go to sleep on it, or move freely from one side to the other without fear of being run over, comes down from prehistoric times when a bullock dray was the fastest vehicle ever seen in Collins-street.⁹⁸

Melbourne’s chaotic street traffic had become ‘an orgy of tumult’: ⁹⁹

The pedestrian traffic is badly in need of regulation. Citizens, full of selfishness in lacking thought and consideration of others, stand in the middle of the pathways & intensely hinder people passing by. These people should be heavily fined...Citizens should not be permitted to walk more than two abreast, & should have to keep to the right...No person should be allowed to carry parcels, sticks, umbrellas, or any other thing through the streets that assumed more space than was reasonable. Females carry their umbrellas extending beyond their shoulders & men are often to be seen

⁹⁶ *Age*, 27 June 1914, ‘Chaos of the streets.’

⁹⁷ *Age*, 30 April 1914.

⁹⁸ *Argus*, 12 May 1914.

⁹⁹ *Age*, 12 May 1914.

holding sticks in such a manner as to incommode those in their immediate vicinity.¹⁰⁰

While safety commandments in 1918 tempered war between the footpath and the street,¹⁰¹ it was the pedestrian rather than the motorist who was to be blamed for negligence.¹⁰² A lone voice in 1921 – protesting to the MCC that pedestrians' representation was totally lacking at the traffic conferences which were dictated by the interests of the Royal Automobile Club – remained the epitaph for a vanished social itinerary, as well as a vision of an alternative version of social space:

It may be futile, but on behalf of the pedestrians I raise my protest against these traffic restrictions. It is just another instance of the unorganized majority being at the mercy of the organized sections...It is humbug to declare that the object is public safety. The obvious effect is to further establish the fast vehicles' claim to monopolise the roads. High speed in the centre of the city is unreasonable...the Council may as well understand that when pedestrians feel the extreme inconvenience of crossing only at intersections of these long city blocks, the resentment and sense of oppression will be deep indeed.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ 1915/4731, 17/8/1915, Arthur G. Vial, 16/8/1915.

¹⁰¹ Maxims for people to remember: An intersection is soon crossed. Don't walk diagonally. Quit looking at the stars until you reach the footpath. Don't stare at the pavement unless the City pays you for it. It is not economy to use only one eye when crossing intersections. Fools rush in where Traffic Officials fear to tread. Knowing that the Driver was to blame will not dry a widow's tears. One foot on the clutch and one on brake keep the people from woe and wake. An inch saves a pinch. One hand on the wheel suffices for appearances only. Gas is for Carburetters, not for Traffic Officials (1918/4064, 11/9/1918).

¹⁰² *Herald*, 18 December 1921.

¹⁰³ 1921/6248, 2/11/1921, S. K. Hotchkin, 31/10/1921. In 1923, interests lobbying on the question of alterations to traffic regulations included the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, Master Carriers' Association, Chamber of Automotive Industries, Automobile Chamber of Commerce, Victorian Motor Cycle Club, Char-a-banc Proprietors, Victorian Employers' Federation, Taxpayers' Association of Victoria, Swanston Street Hire Car Service Association, Motor Transport and Chauffeurs' Association, and Swanston Street Shopkeepers: 1923/3259, 2/7/1923.

Conclusion

If a city is 'not just a place where things happen but one where they have already happened,'¹⁰⁴ then the interpellation of the past into the present is of great importance. The disappearance of an assumed vibrant nineteenth-century street life may be accompanied by a sense of loss. It could also be suggested that the notion of vibrant street life may be confused as the view of an adventurous or voyeuristic bourgeois of the poverty and lack of private space of the working classes. The spatial reorganisation of city streets, the stricter regulation of the pedestrian, the exclusion of the hawker, the decline of the procession tradition, all have their roots in a period when the city underwent a fundamental social transformation, where a middle-class demand for privacy, separation and specialisation of function, deliberately made the streets 'anonymous and neutral.'¹⁰⁵ The dichotomy of the old street and the new street, of Paddy's Market versus uncluttered artery, ramified into a tension over issues of class (respectable or rough), ethnicity (foreigner or Britisher), age (young or old), time (night or day), gender (male or female), moral and physical hygiene (clean or dirty, honest or deceitful).

In 1912, the so-called hoarding nuisance could stand for the burden of urban ills that weighed a modern city down; the idealism displayed by the *Argus*, however, demonstrated the narrow and exclusionist attitude where the 'needs of the community' were in fact equated with a 'community of exclusion':¹⁰⁶

The hoardings are wrongly accepted as part of the penalty which we pay for civilisation...As men have been knit together by the needs of the community, the right to do what one likes with one's own has been everywhere invaded where the exercise of this right interferes with the health or comfort of one's neighbour. The time is close when the right to make oneself objectionable to others will be so strictly curtailed that cities will be really habitable and

¹⁰⁴ George Watson, 'Confessions of a street walker', *Virginia Quarterly Review* 68, 4 (Autumn 1992), p. 713.

¹⁰⁵ M. J. Daunton, *House and home in the Victorian city: working-class housing 1850-1914*, London, 1983, p. 267.

¹⁰⁶ Kostof, *The city assembled*, p. 119.

beautiful places. Squeaking brakes, hoardings, barking dogs, ugly statues and memorials, and larrikins will be no more.¹⁰⁷

The question is not whether in fact order must be imposed upon people in space to preserve physical safety or to obviate total congestion – that much is undisputed. The point is rather that throughout the history of the control of Melbourne's public street life, clear and conscious decisions were being made at a municipal and judicial level which fundamentally enforced hegemonic consensus and precluded the broad possibilities of social interaction in public space. There is no question that over the course of nearly a hundred years, the streets were at various times in a filthy condition, or that different classes of people found each other obnoxious or offensive. But the amelioration of many physical and social conditions – decreased infant mortality, increased life expectancy, the structural safety of buildings – were too often confused with abstract notions standing for progress: speed, order, visual unity, cleanliness.

In the struggle between public and private interest over the street, the definition of 'public interest' was very particular. After the initial city building decades of the 1840s and 1850s, bolstered by the huge influx of population during the goldrushes, a consolidating urban middle-class became increasingly perturbed by promiscuous mixing of the classes, the threat of uncivilised behaviour, and intrusions on respectability. Environmental determinism eventually looked to visual solutions to social problems, while the cult of domesticity provided an antidote to the pathology of public space in the privacy of the home. The combined influence of the town planning, slum clearance and garden city movements was eventually to systematise and codify the suppression of nuisances and noises and the regulation of space through health and building codes. The increasing professionalisation of planners and architects and the creation of the modernist city led to the transformation of public space in which the elimination of the pedestrian was prerequisite.¹⁰⁸ From the 1890s to the 1920s, the broad agenda of the progressive era – of social and city planning, educational and religious reform – was heightened in Melbourne by the impact of Federation (with Melbourne as the temporary federal capital) and a Royal Visit in 1901, and a growing nationalism peaking

¹⁰⁷ *Argus*, 21 October 1912.

¹⁰⁸ Holston, *The modernist city*, p. 101.

during the First World War which demanded the self-conscious creation of Melbourne as an international city:

The Royal Visit to our city is over, and has done an immense amount of good in many ways...It has further brought the people of Melbourne to realise the value of civic improvement, and I hope that the clearing up of unsightly areas in and around the town that was taken in hand as soon as the visit was announced will be continued.¹⁰⁹

Technical innovations – the railway, electricity, lifts, the telephone, glass architecture, reinforced concrete – assisted the spatial reorganisation and privatisation of public space through architecture (the arcade, the department store, the office block). The introduction of the urban mass transit systems and the motor car may have obviously and most seriously violated public space, and indeed have marked a watershed in the experience of city life, but the annihilation of social space must be accounted for by a much more complex range of social factors.

¹⁰⁹ Russell Grimwade, *Flinders Lane: recollections of Alfred Felton*, Carlton, 1947, p. 69.

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